



Trabajo de Fin de Grado

**«English as a *Lingua Franca* in an international context:  
An approach to the linguistic identity of native and  
non-native English speakers in Geneseo»**

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## ABSTRACT

“Would you rather speak “perfect English” or keep your foreign accent?”

That is the initial question that this paper deals with. As is universally acknowledged, the aim of every foreign-language learner is to become proficient, both in speaking and writing, in a certain language. The more one becomes like a native speaker in language comprehension and pronunciation, the easier it is to get integrated in a certain linguistic community. Nevertheless, what do people understand by “perfect native-English proficiency”? Is there any “perfect accent” in any language? Let us consider the identity of a non-native English speaker: Is that person rejecting his/her original accent, and therefore, his/her cultural background? Is there any sociolinguistic reason for preferring one accent to another? With the help of a self-made survey of both international and American students, this paper aims to provide the answers to these and other questions with regards to the issue of English as *Lingua Franca* (ELF) and its relationship to linguistic identity.

**KEYWORDS:** English as a *Lingua Franca*, linguistic identity, accent, globalization

## RESUMEN

“¿Preferirías hablar un “inglés perfecto” o mantener tu acento original?”

Ésta ha sido la pregunta que ha motivado la redacción de este trabajo. Como es bien sabido, el propósito de todo estudiante a la hora de aprender una lengua extranjera es llegar a ser competente en dicha lengua, tanto en comprensión como en producción, oral y escrita. Cuanto uno más se asemeja a un hablante nativo, más fácil es para dicha persona la integración en una comunidad lingüística dada. Sin embargo, ¿qué se entiende por “nivel experto de inglés”? ¿Acaso existe el “accento perfecto” en alguna lengua? ¿Y qué ocurre con la identidad de dicho hablante no nativo del inglés? ¿Está, entonces, rechazando su acento original, y por ende, sus antecedentes socioculturales? ¿Qué es de la identidad de este hablante? ¿Hay alguna razón sociolingüística para preferir un acento u otro? Con la ayuda de una encuesta propia realizada tanto a estudiantes internacionales como a estudiantes americanos, este papel aportará las respuestas a estas y otras preguntas que traten del tema del inglés como *Lingua Franca* (ILF) y de la identidad lingüística.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Inglés como *Lingua Franca*, identidad lingüística, acento, globalización

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them from there over all the Earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world.

(Genesis, 11:6-9)

To attempt to get everyone to speak English is like trying to build the Tower of Babel. Whereas some people might assert that the existence of one universal language in our current society would imply a wide range of social improvements – and hence, return to the time before the construction of that mythic biblical Tower, others would argue that the negative consequences would outweigh the positive consequences because of the damage it would do to the linguistic identity of the speakers. Under the title of “English as a *Lingua Franca* in an international context” we aim to provide a critical approach on this topic, especially with regards to the disparities between native and non-native English speakers’ thoughts.

### 1.1. Justification

It becomes certainly strenuous to allude to the uncountable reasons that support the necessity of studying this topic in depth. From the total number of languages in the world, nowadays there are only five that have a large number of speakers: Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish, Hindi and Arabic (cf. <http://ethnologue.com/statistics>). English is, of all the mentioned, the only one which has arguably become a universal language.

According to Kachru (1981: 21), a universal language is one used by a great number of people in order to communicate with others from a different cultural and linguistic background. By way of explanation, given a scenario in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which two persons who speak different languages need to establish some sort of communication, it might be undoubtedly assumed that at least one of them would use English as a conversational tool in order to accomplish communicative success. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, this ideal pragmatic situation could be taken for granted in today’s world due to the prevalence of English. Thus, we must note the events that have made this linguistic phenomenon so knowledgeable, and study whether it would still remain so in the future. Additionally, we must consider the matter of English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) in relationship with linguistic identity through a theoretical and practical analysis.

The linguist and researcher David Crystal was not wrong when in 1997 he stated that “within 10 years, there will be more L2 English speakers than L1 speakers” (cited in Tomlinson, 2007: 126). In 2016, there are 340 million people whose first language is English. Nonetheless, out of the 840 million total English speakers, there are 510 million of L2 English speakers (cf. <http://ethnologue.com/statistics>). With such statistics, it is clear that there is sufficient evidence to delve deeper into the linguistic identity of these communities. Throughout this paper, we will take into consideration the historical reasons behind the spread of English, such as colonization. We will also consider how those who speak a minority language might be threatened by the expansion of English.

## 1.2. Objectives and hypothesis

By and large, the main objective of this research paper is to analyze the current situation of English as a *Lingua Franca* and the attitudes towards this issue from both native English and non-native English speakers. The aim is to examine how the linguistic identity of each speech community relates to the English-speaking world. In order to achieve a depth of understanding on this subject, we will utilize an empirical study and a theoretical framework to accomplish the following objectives:

- First and foremost, to understand and define the concepts of *Lingua Franca* and ‘linguistic identity’, in relation to related fields of study;
- To analyze the events that have made English become a global language;
- To interpret the attitudes of actual native English speakers contrasted against non-native English speakers from all over the world about the issue of ELF, with considerations for their respective linguistic identities;
- If possible, to predict the future of English as an international communicative tool.

In order to reach these objectives, our initial hypothesis would be to say that there is a universal preference exhibited by non-native speakers to become more proficient in the concept of linguistic identity. In fact, as for English variety, we consider a predominant preference for North-American English, as a result of the historical background and the actual socio-economic power of the United States. To conclude with the hypothesis, we think that the growing popularity of English will lead to a possibly monolingual society in the future.

### 1.3. Methodology

As for the methodology of this project, a very specific process has been arranged. The practical framework of this project consists of an empirical analysis consisting of a self-made survey. We will interpret the final results of this survey with a focus on linguistics, but we will also give concession to topics such as history, politics or economics.

On behalf of the global structure of this academic paper, it has been agreed to follow the Bachelor thesis guidelines provided by the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences from the University of Cádiz. Looking at this research in more detail, the theoretical framework is essentially composed of the historical and sociocultural background of the English language. It helped us to understand the evolution of not only the language but also everything that entails the English culture, so that it became the universal communicative verbal tool in today's world. Plus, the concepts of *Lingua Franca* and linguistic identity will be covered, this time from an interdisciplinary linguistic perspective. Finally, the theory will enclose some words on the future of English as a *Lingua Franca* and the possibility of being substituted by the Spanish language, instead. On the other hand, the practical framework will constitute the heart of this paper. It consists of the empirical study of several non-native English speakers from the Netherlands, France, South-Korea, Japan, China and Argentina. With the results obtained, we will provide a linguistic interpretation and an overall conclusion to the project. The one who writes expects nothing but the fulfillment of every objective and hypothesis proclaimed in the previous pages.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Historical and sociocultural background

The fact that English is seen as a widespread language in our current world does not mean that it was always the case. In the past, Latin acquired meaningful roles in many aspects of life. However, in the past two centuries, in spite of being regarded as a futile language in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, English has definitely transcended over more profitable languages as an international communicative language. To appreciate this improvement from an indisputable perspective, one only has to compare the current situation with John Dryden's words. This English poet describes his own language in 1693 as it follows:

We have yet no English *prosodia*, not so much as a tolerable dictionary, or grammar, so that our language is in a manner barbarous; [...] and I rather fear a declination of the language, than hope and advancement of it in the present age.

(cited in Hadow, 1908: 163)

According to Braj B. Kachru, British colonialism was the main reason for English to upgrade and spread socially and culturally all over the world. The nature of colonization led to a sort of mandatory bilingualism in heavily colonized areas, such as most of Africa and parts of Asia (cited in Ferguson and Heath, 1981: 22). The mandatory nature of this bilingualism certainly influenced the attitudes towards the imposed language, as it also happened with Spanish or French in other cultures in that time. In their attempt to implement the language, federal policies brought from the British metropolis forbade the use of any language other than English in the colonies (cf. Leap, 1977: 134). Thereupon, the situation of the Anglo-Saxon language began to improve at the time European colonizers arrived to North America. The sixteenth-century poet St. John de Crevecoeur defined America in his *Letters to an American Farmer* as a “melting pot” nation. In plain English, the New World was quickly composed by over 200 different languages and cultures. In Kachru's words, the positive aspects of English include, besides its rich literary tradition, its proven capacity to absorb from various languages and cultures (cited in Ferguson and Heath, 1981: 23). This is one of the reasons why English became such a global language. Thanks to the linguistic contact, even from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, English is a language formed by the addition and modification of further related languages. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Latin was the universal language of Europe. Nevertheless, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, French attempted to work as a substitute, although it never gained the global recognition as Latin.

Many eighteenth-century European writers, including John Adams, realized about the linguistic changes that were taking place in Europe, and hence, to all the countries alike, especially in the United States of America:

English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the language of the world than Latin was in the last or French in the present age. The reason of this is because the increasing population in America, and their universal connection and correspondence with all nations will, aided by the influence of England in the world, whether great or small, force their language into general use, in spite of all the obstacles that may be thrown in their way, if any such there should be.

(cf. Yadav, 2005: 41)

The beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century supposed a great period for Great Britain, since it became the world's leading industrial and trading power. Henceforth, speaking in English was crucial: Firstly, because technological and scientific progress at that time was mostly collected in English. If one wanted to get access to that knowledge, one had to know the language so that the terminology could be understood. Closely related to the idea mentioned before, English was a requirement when thinking of employment, although this has not changed much in our current society. There are strong thoughts to support these ideas. According to the English teacher Isaac Pitman, the British Empire already covered a third of the Earth's surface and nearly a quarter of the population in the world already spoke English in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, around 60 million people spoke English in 1850s, and in 1870s, the number of speakers increased until reaching the 1,000 billion. The German philologist Jakob Grimm, one of the most influential of that time, asserted in 1851:

Of all modern languages, not one has acquired such great strength and vigor as the English [...] it may be called justly a language of the world, destined to reign in future with still more extensive sway over all parts of the globe.

(cf. Crystal, 2012:74)

The linguist David Crystal agrees with Kachru on the fact that the expansion of British colonial power is one of the factors that contributed to the present world status of English. Nevertheless, he asserts that, although the British power peaked towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the English language position remained untouched thanks to the emergence of the United States of America as the leading economic power on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, onwards: "Brits gave Americans the control of language development" (Crystal, 2012: 59).



Throughout the last two centuries, English has only grown. The First World War was the first attempt towards the consolidation of English, and the Second World War made this language the international aircraft control communicative tool. In recent years, in fact, there have been several attempts to refine and improve its use in this field. All in all, there are strong reasons to support the rise of this global language. To begin with, one may find names like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Guardian*, among others, as the current main media coverage in the world. We can see the repercussions of English not only in press, but also in music, fashion and even food. Most of the content consumed in the current society is brought and spread from the United States. Moreover, if we look at the linguistic facts, we can see that most of the neologisms that carefully and actively subjugate the lexicons of every language in the world have foundations in English. Just to mention an instance, the concept ‘selfie’, which is derived from ‘self’, since it is a picture that one take of him or herself. Most of those new-created words arrived with the implementation of the Internet in our daily routine. Nowadays, there is a tight relationship between the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and, especially, the younger generations. And that is no surprise, since technology and English have a lot to do with one another, since this language continues to be the chief *Lingua Franca* on the Internet. The journalist Michael Specter wrote under the heading *Computer Speak; World, Wide, Web: 3 English Words*:

.If you want to take full advantage of the Internet, there is only one way to do it: Learn English, which has more than ever become America’s greatest and most effective export.

(cf. Specter, 1996: The New York Times)

In other words, the expansion of the Internet strengthens the leading status of English. On the Internet, all languages are as equal as their users wish to make them, and English emerges as an alternative rather than a threat, which is good news for those who are concerned that global intelligibility should not lose out to local identity. In November 2015, English, Chinese and Spanish were the three most used languages on the Internet by the users, especially English with 880 million of users, which translates into a 61.6% of all websites whose content language is English (<http://internetworldstats.com>). It would not be fair to finish this part of the paper without shading some light on the political influence on the English worldwide spread. The best example can be found in The United Nations, which consists of six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish; and over 50 different commissions.

From all the languages mentioned above, English and French (especially the prior) help as the main working languages. Nevertheless, English is for sure the only official language of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and the only working language in the European Free Trade Association (<http://un.org>). Furthermore, the European Council provided the following results obtained in a survey made in 1996: With a 95% of agreement on average, interviewed asserted that “English will retain its role as the dominant language in world media and communications”, “English is essential for progress as it will provide the main means of access to high-tech communication and information over the next 25 years” or “English will remain the world’s language for international communication in the next years” (Crystal, 2012: 113).

In short, English is a language that found itself in the right place at the right time. From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, English was the leading language of colonial nations thanks to Britain. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was the task of the United States of America who made English the leading language of the economic power.

## **2.2. Linguistic background**

### **2.2.1. *Lingua Franca***

Before analyzing the proper notion of *English as a Lingua Franca*, the very concept of *Lingua Franca* needs to be first defined more precisely.

Language used as a means of communication between populations speaking vernaculars that are not mutually intelligible. The term was first used during the middle Ages to describe a French — and Italian — based jargon, or pidgin, that was developed by Crusaders and traders in the eastern Mediterranean and characterized by the invariant forms of its nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica

“Langue auxiliaire de relation utilisée par des groupes ayant des langues maternelles différentes. C'est par exemple le français et l'anglais dans leurs usages diplomatiques, le swahili dans l'est de l'Afrique, l'anglais en Inde, etc.”<sup>1</sup>

Larousse

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<sup>1</sup> “Auxiliary connecting language used by groups which own different mother tongues. For instance, French or English in their diplomatic usages, Swahili in East Africa, English in India, etc.”  
(Translation provided by the author of this paper)

The scholar Alan Firth defines a *Lingua Franca* as a language that emerges from a sort of linguistic contact situation between speakers “who share neither a common native language nor a common national culture, and for whom that language is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, 1996: 240). This approach to the inter-linguistic contact situation is what the anthropologist Jocelyne Dakhlija gathers in her definition of *Lingua Franca*:

Dans un sens strictement linguistique, on définit comme langue franque une langue "nationale", ou la langue d'un groupe, lorsque celle-ci devient une langue véhiculaire, une "langue de contact" comme l'est aujourd'hui l'anglais. [...] Dans une deuxième acception, en effet, qui est l'acception originelle, mais la moins connue, les linguistes désignent comme "langues franques" des mixtes de langues usités entre des locuteurs que n'unit aucune autre langue commune et dont l'existence est limitée dans le temps; les langues franques ne deviennent pas la langue maternelle, la langue en propre d'un groupe particulier.

(cited in Verleysen, 2011: 15)<sup>2</sup>

In conjunction with all the meanings provided, Ferguson and Heath defines the concept of *Lingua Franca* as a language used for communication between speakers of different mother tongues (Ferguson and Heath, 1981: 530). This couple distinguishes the concept of *Lingua Franca* from ‘universal language’: “A language proposed to serve as a means of communication throughout the world in addition to or replacing the multiplicity of current languages; also used to mean an ideal language, which could express all possible meanings more effectively than natural languages” (Ferguson and Heath, 1981: 533); and from ‘language of wider communication’ (LWC), defined as a language which is widely used as an additional language by people of different mother tongues; often applied to former colonial languages, such as English, French or Spanish. When choosing the appropriate term to refer to the phenomenon of English as a global language, some paradoxes may be found. Whereas most of the academic papers use the concept from above indistinctively, as if they were synonyms, others like Ferguson and Heath may draw a dividing line among the hefty glossary that entails this sociolinguistic issue. Likewise, Jennifer Jenkins uses the term “world Englishes” since “it refers to all local English varieties regardless of which of Kachru’s three circles they come from” (Jenkins, 2009: 200).

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<sup>2</sup> “From a strictly linguistic sense, “lingua franca” is defined as a “national” language, or a group language, as it develops into a vehicular language, a “contact” language as English is nowadays. [...] In a second acception, which is effectively the original acception, yet the least known, linguists assigned as “lingua franca” those mixed languages, which were used among speakers who did not share any other language in common and whose existence is pretty limited in time; “linguae franca” do not develop into a mother-tongue language, since it is a language which belongs to a certain group” (Dakhlija, 14-15).  
(Translation provided by the author of this paper)

All thoughts considered, and in affinity with most researchers, this paper will employ the concept of English as a *Lingua Franca* as a synonym of Jenkins' 'world Englishes'. ELF is sometimes known as the equivalent for EIL (English as an International Language), without considering the semantic attributions to the adjective "international" in this subject, as in 'International English'. It only implies the existence of one unique variety of English, the North American. Therefore, the concept of *Lingua Franca* is extensively preferred.

Once the concept of *Lingua Franca* is acknowledged, and leaving aside the historical and sociocultural features of this phenomenon, it would be noticeable to regard the linguistic aspects to understand English as the international communicative tool throughout the last few years. Many speculations have been said on this issue, and they all seem to justify this success on the grammar:

In its easiness of grammatical construction, in its paucity of inflection, in its almost total disregard of the distinctions of gender exception those of nature, in the simplicity and precision of its terminations and auxiliary verbs, not less than in the majesty, vigor and copiousness of its expressions, our mother-tongue [English] seems well adapted by organization to become the language in the world.

(cf. *The Athenaeum* 1848 in Crystal, 2012: 8)

That is, English is regarded as a simple-grammar language. On the one hand, it can be agreed on this fact in contrast to Romance languages like Spanish or French, which generically are more inflectional languages than Germanic compositional languages, as it happens in German, for instance. Nevertheless, from a lexical point of view, English is in fact more Romance than Germanic language (Crystal, 2012: 6), especially from a global point of view, since it is a language that has been created by the contact of others, and therefore, most of their lexicon already counts with Romance-influenced vocabulary and locutions. Also, the fact of being an inflectional language does not mean that the possibilities of becoming a *Lingua Franca* are reduced. Latin was very inflectional in endings and gender differences, and still was the global language in the past. Furthermore, the language acquisition period of time is on average the same for children of all cultures, regardless the difference in grammar of their languages. On the other hand, no position has been taken on the pronunciation struggles from a non-native English speakers' point of view. Whereas in more complex-grammar languages, like Spanish, there are only five vowels, English counts on with twelve, and this was no impediment for this language to spread worldwide.

Coming back to Jenkins' words, we ought to shed some light on Kachru's circles as the most successful model to describe English as a global language. According to this Indian linguist, the English world was composed by three circles:

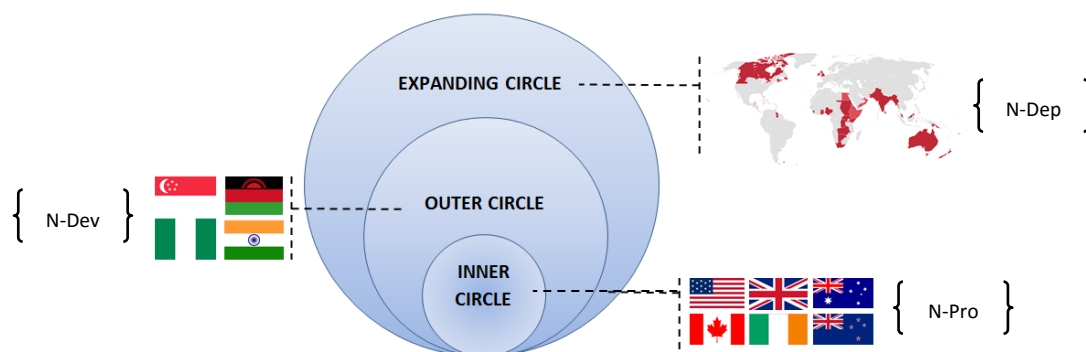


Figure 1: Interpretation of Braj B. Kachru's three circles of English  
Source: Prepared by the author, based on Verleynsen (2011)

The Inner Circle is formed by English-mother-tongue countries, which have their own variety of English that has been traditionally regarded as “the correct ones” (cf. Verleynsen, 2011: 28). These countries are the United States of America, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Great Britain. Kachru defines it as a norm providing circle. It is interesting to mention how in investigations carried out by VOICE (the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English) no more than a 10% of Inner Circle speakers are allowed to participate. According to Jenkins (2007: 201), this group makes other speakers from other Circles feel uncomfortable and forced to speak like them.

The Outer Circle includes the 50 countries which historically belonged to the British Empire, especially India, Singapore, Malawi and Nigeria. These countries are “norm developing”, which means that they developed their own variety of English as a result of linguistic contact and conflict with their mother-tongue. In these cases, English became a co-official language in these territories because of the colonization. According to Jenkins (2007: 203), there are people who used to believe that Outer Circle English were interlanguages, defined by the Oxford Dictionary as an artificial language used by intermediation especially in translation contexts; rather legitimate varieties of English with their own norm of use.

Lastly, the Expanding Circle denotes basically the rest of the territories where English is spoken as a foreign language<sup>3</sup>, where any disparity from native Standard English is considered a mistake. Therefore, these speakers are norm-dependent. For some authors, ELF is monolithic and monocentric, “in which intercultural communication and cultural diversity are to be made a necessary casualty” (Rubdy and Saraceni, 2006: 11). From a pluricentric approach, ELF (English learnt for intercultural communication) and EFL (English learnt specifically for communication with English native speakers) are one and the same. No distinction on this subject should be made (Jenkins, 2007:202).

We ought to make a point when mentioning the word “mistake”. These errors can be made in any linguistic aspect: production, comprehension, phonetics, pragmatics, etc. Similar studies have been conducted on morphosyntaxis, proving that ELF speakers commit most of the times the so-called “typical English mistakes”. One may think of the zero marking of 3<sup>rd</sup> person inflective –s in present tenses (i.e. “\*she drink”, “\*he walk”, “\*it have”) or the confusion between infinitive and gerund verb forms, among others (Breiteneder, 2005: 8).

- \* no third-person singular present tense -s marking
  - \* interchangeable use of the relative pronouns *who* and *which*
  - \* flexible use of definite and indefinite articles
  - \* pluralization of mass nouns
  - \* use of the demonstrative *this* with both singular and plural nouns
  - \* extension of the uses of certain ‘general’ verbs
  - \* use of a uniform, invariable question tag
  - \* insertion of additional prepositions and nouns
- (adapted from Seidlhofer 2005b: R92)

Figure 2: Tendencies in ELF lexicogrammar

Source: Klimpfinger, T. (2005). “Mind you sometimes you have to mix’ – The role of code-switching in English as a Lingua Franca”. *Vienna English Working Papers* 16/2, 20 (16(2)).

<sup>3</sup> A difference should be stated between the concept of ‘English as a foreign language’ (EFL) and ‘English as a second language’ (ESL). In Verleysen’s words, “EFL indicates the use of English in a non-English-speaking region, where study normally occurs as part of the normal school curriculum. English as a second language, on the other hand, is normally used with reference to non-native speakers of English living in Anglophone countries” (Verleysen, 2011: 28).

In any case, “although these deviant uses do not detract from successful communication, they should not be regarded as “errors” in the ELF context” (Verleysen, 2011: 30). According to Jenkins (2007: 202), ELF distinguishes between difference and deficiency, and does not assume that an item that differs from English as a Native Language (ENL)<sup>4</sup> is by definition an error as far as there is some communicative effectiveness: As we can see, mistakes can be always made by non-native speakers, even in the “simplest grammar languages”. Back to Kachru’s model, although it wants to work as a starting point of the subject of study of this paper, some critics have been presented. Just to mention one, the Austrian Cornelia Hülbauer said: “English as a *Lingua Franca* is defined functionally by its use in intercultural communication rather than formally by its reference to native-speaker norms” (Hülbauer, 2008: 27). Globalization makes the distinction of these three closed circles to get blurred, since this can be seen from two different points of view.

On the one hand, from the non-native English speakers, immigration alters the Inner Circle, speakers in the Outer Circle are becoming functionally native speakers as a result of the preference of English over the other local mother-tongue language, and the Expanding Circle is using intelligible and fit-for-purpose forms of English as a result of a cultural Americanization. Kachru’s idea was that English as a *Lingua Franca* was used for Expanding Circle speakers to communicate with the other two, but now we actually understand that it is more about speakers within the Expanding Circle. Regarding a tight relationship with the linguistic identity of the speaker who belong to that circle: “Speakers of L1s as Korean, German, Indonesian and Chinese in my data are, when using ELF, individuals who tend to transfer their L1 discourse conventions into their ELF talk — while at the same time constructing something as fluid and immaterial as the ‘community of ELF speakers’, a consortium that is always constituted anew in any ongoing talk” (House, 2003: 569).

From a native English speakers’ perspective, their own language is being used for them to communicate with non-native speakers, which means that the hierarchical disposition of the circles would be reduced to be placed at the same level, which is in fact a more realistic situation in the current world: “as a consequence of its international use, English is being shaped at least as much by its non-native speakers as by its native speakers” (Seidlhofer, 2005: 339).

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<sup>4</sup> Having as a reference Jennifer Jenkins’ perspective, in the preceding and subsequent lines, the concept of “native English speaker” shall be understood as those who belong to Kachru’s both Inner and Outer Circles (Jenkins, 2007: 207).

To briefly recap all the thoughts mentioned, we can appeal to Juliane House's words:

ELF talk cannot be conceived with a view to an ideal English norm, and the ELF speaker cannot be measured in his/her competence vis-à-vis 'the native speaker'. A lingua franca speaker is not *per definitionem* not fully competent in the part of his/her linguistic knowledge under study.

(cf. House, 2003:557)

Although there are authors like Rushdie assert that English language ceased to be property of only English speakers a long time ago, this issue leads to the question of who owns the language. Jocelyne Dakhlija effectively highlights the communicative character of English as a *Lingua Franca*, even at the beginning of its conception as a global language. The scholar asserts that during times of colonization times, language would certainly belong not to the speaker but to the interlocutor, since that language was not regarded as a common language, but as the language of other (Verseylen, 2011: 20). This is tightly linked to the linguist identity of the speakers during colonization. Therefore, the feeling of ownership changed as the public image of the language also changed. As a language becomes more prestigious, speakers of that language can appropriately feel more interesting or accredited to that language. Nevertheless, considering the previous theoretical lines, we might agree that "language belongs to the speakers, but in this case, the reason for English becoming a global language is not so much due to the number of speakers, but more so with whom the speakers are (Crystal, 2012: 5). In the case of Latin, it became a worldwide language during Roman Empire. The reason for its linguistic supremacy was far to be related to the number of Romans, but to the power this civilization had. Although both civilizations have a distinct global presence with inherently reinforces their languages, Latin remained after the fall of Rome due to the Catholic Church, and we have yet to see a fall of American global power.



Figure 3: Comic strip exemplifying Globish or Global Englishes  
Source: <http://fundians.com/english-globish-funny>



In short, the need to communicate culturally between various societies facilitates the use of a dominant *Lingua Franca*. This started with pidgins: “a form of language, reduced in vocabulary, simplified in grammar, and typically containing elements from several languages, which arises for restricted communication functions between speakers of different mother tongues; it is no one’s mother tongue” (Ferguson and Heath, 1981: 351), mostly in economic circumstances. Nevertheless, we do not want to forget that, when we talk of the English as an international language, we talk about an abstract concept, since there are actually a great number of Englishes present in the current world.

### 2.2.2. Linguistic identity

As Piet Verleysen asserts (2011: 5), globalization is drastically changing the world as we conceive it, especially in the field of communication; languages play a major role to guarantee effective communication. Languages and language policy are instrumental in shaping the society we want for the future. As it has already been proven, this linguistic phenomenon is all about the speakers. Nevertheless, English as a *Lingua Franca* has two labels: a language of identification and a language of communication. Therefore, a distinction between the concepts of *Lingua Franca* and linguistic identity need to be theoretically scrutinized.

In the context of global studies, the anthropologist Joseph Sung-Yul Park asserts that ‘linguistic identities’ may refer to the sense of belonging to a community from a linguistic perspective, i.e. “to the varying ways in which we come to understand the relationship between our language and ourselves” (cf. Park in Juergensmeyer and Anheier, 2012: 1080). Likewise, according to Tsen-Shan Sharon Wang, for individuals whose L2 is English, accent is the defining factor in issues of identity (Wang, 2010: 4). In any case, it is universally accepted that the two can perfectly co-exist in harmony in pragmatic situations. Looking back to ancient time, the sense of identity was based on observing the differences in production. “They speak differently from us; so they must be a different lot altogether” (Rajagolapai, 2001: 19). By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the combination of nationhood and language reached its peak point with the motto: “One land, one nation, one language”. The professor Kanavillil Rajagolapai suggests as an example of linguistic identity the case of East Timore in Indonesia. They elected Portuguese to be the national language, in spite of being spoken by a 5% of the population and having English as a shared language by the rest of the neighbor islands.

Rajaglapai (2001: 24) quotes the following words about East Timore citizens: “From now on, we will be speaking a language that you do not understand; that is our way of letting you know that we have had enough of you and have no further interest in communicating with you”. Another example would be Jenkins’, when relating to Korean Airlines preferences for French speakers of English rather than native speakers, because Koreans found French speakers more intelligible (Jenkins, 2012: 203).

The same way that linguistic identity can be used in linguistic politics by the native speakers to gain more independence (i.e., Catalan in Spain), there are many cases, especially in the past, where this was used to achieve the opposite. Crystal declares that the implementation of English, in most of the African and Asiatic countries during colonization, represented a sort of elitism and westernization, and hence, modernization. Taking this point as if it were positive, one might argue against it and, therefore, appeal to the experience of the Kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o:

English became the language of my formal education. In Kenya, English became more than a language: it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference. Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscription such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY.

(cited in Harris and Rampton, 2003: 73)

It is impossible to think of a positive gaze towards English, taking into account these historical events. In fact, according to Dakhliya, the phenomenon of *Lingua Franca* should be associated with the idealized notion of peaceful linguistic and cultural exchange, since “la lingua franca n’est porteuse d’aucune valeur, d’aucun message irénique; ce n’est pas un espéranto” (Dakhliya, 2008: 481).

We must consider two parties affected by the fact that English is becoming the global language: Native and non-native English speakers. To natives, there is a pride about it becoming a *Lingua Franca*. It is generally perceived positively because it analyses the native speakers’ lives easier. The only negative usually resides in the fact that native speakers might feel as if their linguistic heritage is being encroached upon therefore, putting the standardization of the language at risk. As for non-native speakers, there is a positive motivation for learning English.

However, whereas one may be discouraged by the number of native speakers and the general dominance of the language, for many, the benefits outweigh the negative aspects. For those who speak minority languages, the threat of English taking over might be daunting, causing resentment, frustration or anger. (Crystal, 2012: 19). Linguistic identities are tightly linked with what Ferguson and Heath defined as ‘linguistic insecurity’, that is, a sociolinguistic case in which a speaker reports that his or her own pronunciation differs from what he or she considers correct: Individuals are misinterpreted based on the way they speak, provoking prejudice and discrimination (Ferguson and Heath, 1981: 530).

While there are many varieties of English for a non-native speaker to favor, in the practical part of this paper, I will prove if it is true what “language and power go together. American English is accepted for the power and superiority which America as a nation has acquired in the areas of science, technology, commerce, military affairs and politics” (Crystal, 2012: 5). The idea that US English would prevail over UK variety because of the particular American culture is supported by many authors like Crystal. This is what Dylan Thomas defined as “two cultures separated by the barrier of a common language”. According to Simone, one of Jerkin’s interviewees: “We were always told that we have to learn English - and nobody mentioned that we will probably just acquire a variety of English” (Jenkins, 2007: 119). This is what Crystal names as “World Standard Spoken English” (WSSE). This is a new form of English. If three speakers from different linguistic background gather up in the same table, they would speak English, although this does not mean that they have to “give up their national linguistic identities just because they are going to an international meeting. But of course this scenario assumes that these three languages are still respected, alive and well, and living in their respective home countries” (Crystal, 2012: 139). “Standard English is typically defined as the English of a native speaker, usually containing American or British pronunciation and idioms and consistent with a native speaker’s fluency” (Wang, 2010: 83).

With the welcome of a global language, some fears come with it afterwards, i.e. the risk for minority languages death and the lack of necessity to learn a foreign language, and hence, the death of multilingualism. Crystal faces the concept of linguistic power, used when a language rules over the others; to the linguistic death, in which a minority language extents because of the preference for the overlapping, and hence, more powerful, language. There are many scholars who believe on the so-called “myth of American monolingualism”. According to Ferguson and Heath, Americans attitudes towards languages other than English are equally confusing.

That is, “many Americans regard the use of another language in the USA as assign of inferiority and disadvantage [...]. They view the study of foreign languages in schools as *non particularly* useful in achieving a good education or preparing for a career” (Ferguson and Heath, 1981: xxviii). Therefore, according to NS standards, the learner’s aim is to have mastered the language. For individuals whose L2 is English, accent is the defining factor for issues of identity and perception. Jenkins also spoke to many people who felt inferior to native speakers for their own NNS accent:

I really feel bad about this you know, I feel like I have to lose my identity. I’m a Taiwanese person and I should feel comfortable about this, and I just feel that when I’m speaking English, I will want to be like a native speaker, and it’s really hard, you know. (Jenkins, 2007: 205)

There is very little left to be said about this issue. Although the attitude point would be still questionable, it is true that the educational system in America, regarding foreign languages, is very left behind in comparison to the European. Whereas in Spain, for instance, children start learning the first foreign language at the age of five (if not sooner), American kids have to wait until Middle School to start a three-year academic formation on a foreign language, once they are 12. If it is true that the Americans attitude towards their interest of learning further languages have changed, this matter-of-fact should be demonstrated in their own educative system, although it is not the case. Ferguson and Heath asserted that “Americans traveling or living outside their country have a reputation (in part deserved) for not learning local languages and for ignoring language aspects of national life in the host country” (Ferguson and Heath, 1981: xxvi). Contrarily, there are authors who certainly support the integrating nature of English as a *Lingua Franca*, especially with minority languages. For instance, Verleypsen declares:

Defined in this way as a ‘language for communication’, ELF is not meant to compete with national or local languages, nor endanger their survival or integrity. On the contrary, the use of ELF may encourage speakers of minority languages to use their local language ‘for emotional binding to their own culture, history and tradition’. (Verleypsen, 2011: 33).

As for diversity, House thinks that English as a lingua franca in Europe would not affect linguistic diversity in the continent: “It unites more than it divides, simply because it may be “owned” by all Europeans – not as a cultural symbol, but a means of enabling understanding” (cited in The Guardian, 19/04/2001).

In short, it has been shown how accent and identity are closely related. Accent, in our first or second language, is tied to our perception of ourselves. It can indicate our ethnic affiliation (cf. Gatbonton et. al., 2005) or a sense of belonging to a particular reference group.

In the dynamics of a language classroom, students tend to sound like the target model or it may even make some learners feel disloyal to their ethnic group, as it was shown in an interesting study of advanced L2 users, who reported being able to pass for native speakers (Piller, 2002). One subject revealed that she always makes it clear early on that she is not a native speaker: “If I don’t”, she says, “some reference to something every German knows will come up, and I won’t understand, and they’ll think I’m stupid” (p. 195). This example illustrates a rarely discussed negative consequence of acquiring a native-like L2 accent-the expectations of a native-like understanding of the cultures as well. Not all learners fear a loss of identity when using their L2, and many do express a desire for native-like pronunciation (cf. Scales et. al., 2006).

Nonetheless, studies exploring the relationship between accent and identity reveal the complex social and psychological variables involved in teaching pronunciation. If we are sensitive to both ends of the continuum – the downside for some learners of sounding too native-like versus the embarrassment of being misunderstood –we are better able to support learners in the goals that they set for themselves (cf. Celce-Murcia, et. al., 2014: 142). By and large, language is “the chief means of showing where we belong and of distinguishing one social group from another. [...] Dialects emerge because they give identity to the groups which own them. If you wish to tell everyone which part of a country you are from, you can wave your flag, wear a label on your coat or, the most convenient solution, because it is always with you, speak with a distinctive accent and dialect” (cf. Crystal, 2012: 134).

### **2.3. English or Spanish as a *Lingua Franca*?**

As David Graddol (1997:5) once quoted, “by showing how our present rose from the past, we will be better equipped to speculate on what future might hold in store”. In the line with this quotation, this part of the paper will attempt to predict the future of English as a *Lingua Franca*, considering other languages such as Spanish, which is increasingly gaining more speakers in the current century. In order to analyze this issue, it would be noteworthy to attend to the statistics of the Spanish language in the world.

In contrast to English, Spanish is a language spoken by more than 450 million speakers. This is translated into an increasing 6,7% of the worldwide population, divided into the three highest Spanish-speaking populated countries: Mexico, United States and Spain. This fact makes Spanish the fourth most spoken language in the world and the second as regards to international communicative purposes, right after English (cf. Jenkins, 2009: 200). It is noteworthy to see how the United States hosts, after Mexico, most of the worldwide Spanish speakers, in spite of having English as the predominant language. Historically, Spanish and English have been in contact since 1513, and since then, the Hispano/Latino population has been growing. In fact, in contrast to the last year, we see an overwhelming increase of this speaking community in the country (cf. United States Census Bureau, 2015).

Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that, the same way that English became such a popular language in the world because of the United States, we can think of Spanish as a future substitute of English as a *Lingua Franca*, too.

Some authors believe that the status of the language is determinant for its success. According to Portes and Hao (2002: 894), the status of a certain language depends on four categories: economy, social, history and linguistics, and they are associated to the different speaking communities. For instance, Spanish became a “trendy” language among several European courts, especially throughout XVI and XVII centuries, that is, when the Spanish empire reached its peak expansion point. Spanish serves as a key for culture access in the current younger generations in Miami. In fact, in the 90s, almost half millions of American citizens in Florida were unable to speak in English (82% were Spanish speakers, cf. Portes and Hao, 2002: 906), and the situation has not changed ever since (cf. Lynch, 2000: 272).

The linguistic contact between English and Spanish in the United States is evident. Stavans (2000: 11) declared that “Spanish is already the non-official language of the whole American nation”. In fact, we have evidence to think that English can be easily substituted by any other language, in this case said Spanish, because there is no actual official language in the country. As a matter of fact, out of the 45 states which voted in the 1980s for establishing English as the official language of the nation, only 14 voted for it (cf. Silvia Corvalán in Ferro Bajuelo, 2011: 17). Although there are currently some social movements motivated to “join the effort to make English the official language” in the United States (cf. <http://usenglish.org/>), English is still the unofficial language in the country today.

Bernie Reeves (2009) analyzes this issue, and he discovers that, in contrast to further western languages, English is not protected. In fact, according to him, The Modern Language Association has criticized English to be a “racist, imperialistic, chauvinistic and homophobic” language. English is seen as a language of oppression and not of democracy and freedom. It is related to a capitalistic system that strays out of their pride. Reeves writes about the importance of adopting English as an official language “before we lose our national identity, our cultural heritage and our system of government”. This way, we see how there is a threat of the continuity of English in the country, especially by the second most spoken language in the country: Spanish. Reeves writes that immigrants (“most of them from Latin America”), come to the country and they are not required any English courses: “Imagine moving to a foreign country and discovering that the government allows you to enforce the use of your native tongue by law. It’s ridiculous, yet it’s happening in America today”. Spanish is present in the American government more and more. For example, when Kennedy included Chávez in his political party in 1968, both legal and illegal Spanish-speaking immigrants in the country would feel represented.

That explains why in a nation of immigrants, from the early settlers through the massive waves of new citizens who arrived in the late 19th century, one particular group is imbued with elevated status. For the first time in our history, signage, government documents, and a myriad of transactional events in our culture are bilingual, elevating Spanish to equal footing with English.

(Reeves, 2009)

It is important to analyze how all the languages brought to the United States by non-English immigrants have always been displaced in the third generation, as it happened with German, French, Dutch or Polish, among others. Nevertheless, whether it would happen the same with Spanish or not, depends on the author. Carmen Fought (in Cran and McNeil, 2005), together with other linguists, assert that Spanish is no more a threat to English than German or Italian, which ones provoke several fears: “It is still the classical pattern that the first generation born in the States often retain their home language, but by the second or even more the third generation that language is often lost. In any way, Spanish is not a threat to English, but the other way around”. Silvia-Corvalán (1989: 171) insists that the contact between English and Spanish is not associated with any sociocultural prestige, leading to an evident predominance of English in the American country and being Spanish, in any case, subordinated to that one, but never overlapped.

It does not only happen with Spanish. As David Crystal asserts, this can even be compared with French, because if the historical conditions were different, we would be more alike to be talking about World French, instead. The overwhelming usage of English has been reflected even in the United Nations, where in 2010 an article declared the struggle of French as a co-working language together with English, since Spanish was gaining more votes in usage. Nevertheless, there are still supporters of the French preference. There is only one way in which English stops being the global language and it would be when the machine automatic translations develop and integrate totally in the current society. So far, we are fine with English as long as it does not stop.

The English language is a methodological, energetic businesslike and sober language, that does not care much for finery and elegance, but does care for logical consistency and it is opposed to any attempt to narrow-in life by police regulation and strict rules either of grammar or lexicon. As the language is, so also is the nation. [...] One need not be a great prophet to predict that in the near future the number of English-speaking people will increase considerably. It must be a source of gratification to mankind that the tongue spoken by two of the greatest powers of the world is so noble, so rich, so pliant, so expressive and so interesting.

(Jespersen 1905 cited in Fishman 1977f: epigraph)

English as a *Lingua Franca* cannot be analyzed without shedding some light on the language Esperanto. It was a constructed international auxiliary language, which shared the same purpose as any other *Lingua Franca*. The only difference is that the concept “auxiliary” implied that its spread strayed out of any socio-economical or historical dominance, as it happened in the past with French, Arabic or Japanese, or as it happens now with English (cf. Bodmer, 1985: 84). Considering Zamenhof’s goals when creating this language for worldwide communicative purpose, today we can see how Esperanto failed to live up to the hopes of its creator. On the other hand, Esperanto achieved to “enable the learner to make direct use of his knowledge with persons of any nationality, whether the language be universally accepted or not” (Zamenhof in Blanke, 2009: 256). This might justify how language and power are closely related, and the actual reason why a language becomes popular and worldwide used is because of the power of the country that holds that certain language.

Therefore, English as a *Lingua Franca* will still be a fact as long as it keeps the prestige in the United States. It will be left analyzing whether Spanish will overlap that prestige over English by 2050, so that the language spreads worldwide.





In the figure 7, we can see how the most repeated states were Texas, California, Oregon, Florida and New York. On the one hand, the students justified their answers by asserting that those states were very close to the border with Mexico, which made the Hispano migrations more direct and easier. On the other hand, New York City is par excellence the immigration city, not only for Spanish speakers but for worldwide immigrants. When students were asked: “Do you think the United States would become a Spanish-speaking country in the future?”, the answers provided were very varied. Out of the 30 answers, we found positive answers: “I think that in the future, Spanish would have a better side in the public American lives”, as well as negative answers: “The Hispanic population is increasing every year in the United States: music and culture are increasingly shared, but I don’t think we would become a Spanish-speaking country”. Some interviewees provided impartial answers: “I think that Spanish could become an official language of the United States along with English, but not in the place of English. It will become more popular, though” or “I think English has such an important role as a Lingua Franca that the United States would keep it as a predominant language”. Some of the answers provided were highly motivated by the linguistic identity of the students, i.e.: “I do not think Spanish will be spoken instead of English. This is America and English is the native language”. A negative linguistic ideology towards Spanish can be also provoked because of the political instability that the country is passing through. A student who took part in the experiment provided the following opinion:

“No, because at the moment there is a negative stigma about Spanish speaking people. If we can’t unify the country in ratifying even simpler ideas, such as legalizing marihuana and gay marriage, then I don’t think it will be possible for Spanish to be spoken over English. A bilingual USA is an idea that encompasses unity among different regions, cultures and background. The USA is not ready for this, and even less with a wall built around the country to isolate us from worldwide diversity”.

In short, we can see how the success of a language as a Lingua Franca relies totally in the powerfulness of the country that holds that language. We understand that, if English became a worldwide spoken language, especially, because of the powerfulness of the United States, Spanish could be the new Lingua Franca as soon as this country becomes a Spanish-speaking one. The future statistics look very positive towards the success of Spanish, but although these results are found on demographic calculus, there are further features worth taking into account, such as sociopolitical development and linguistic identity and ideology among worldwide speakers, especially in the United States.

### 3. PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. Empirical study

By the elaboration of an online self-made survey with the help of the virtual platform ©GoogleForms, we finally embraced a total of 115 anonymous volunteers, divided into 35 international students and 80 Americans. The survey was made up of 23 main questions. Different authors' questionnaires, such as Jennifer Jenkins (2007: chapter 6), Ivor Timmis (2002) or Chloe Groom (2012), will help as inspirational examples for this empirical study. The results obtained will also help us toward a diachronic contrast with those authors' results. As for the interviewees, due to the volunteering nature of this study, there was no intention from the interviewer to find an exact number of participants in gender, age nor even ethnicity. This will be considered another feature to be analyzed.

Some thoughts should be shared to explain the field of study where this survey has been accomplished. Although this survey could be derived into a much broader national scope in the country, the interviewer decided to focus in the student community of Geneseo, upstate New York. The State University of New York College at Geneseo (SUNY Geneseo) is well-known for being a strict-selective premier public liberal arts college with a rich tradition on academic excellence. Hence, it was ranked among the 15 best colleges in the United States according to Princeton University<sup>5</sup>. SUNY Geneseo counts with approximately 5,700 undergraduate students. From the total, around 180 are international or exchange students from different universities of Europe, South-America and especially Asia<sup>6</sup>.



Figure 5: Location of Geneseo, NY  
Source: <http://geneseo.edu>



Figure 6: Sturges Hall, SUNY Geneseo  
Source: <http://geneseo.edu>

<sup>5</sup> Further information, cf. <http://princetonreview.com/college-rankings>

<sup>6</sup> Further information, cf. <https://geneseo.edu/ir/fast-facts>

In order to spread out the surveys<sup>7</sup>, besides networking, we appealed to professors from the Languages and Literature department of SUNY Geneseo. It should be a mandatory action to dedicate a couple of thoughts in this paper to express our particular thanks to the Spanish, German and especially English department chairs for making it easier to obtain all the results needed. Finally, we would like to comment that this survey could be derived into a much broader national scope within the country, although we leave the opportunity for further research in the future.

## 3.2. Analysis of the results

### 3.2.1. *Non-native English speakers*

We start analyzing closely the survey made for the international or exchange students, that is, for the non-native English speakers in the student community in Geneseo. The survey was divided into three sections: The first one consisted on nine questions which helped to catalogue the interviewees into the different relevant traits for this research. Before delving into the answers, it would be convenient to highlight that this survey was filled out by both current and old international students. That is, worldwide students who were studying at SUNY Geneseo during the academic year 2015-2016 participated on this questionnaire.

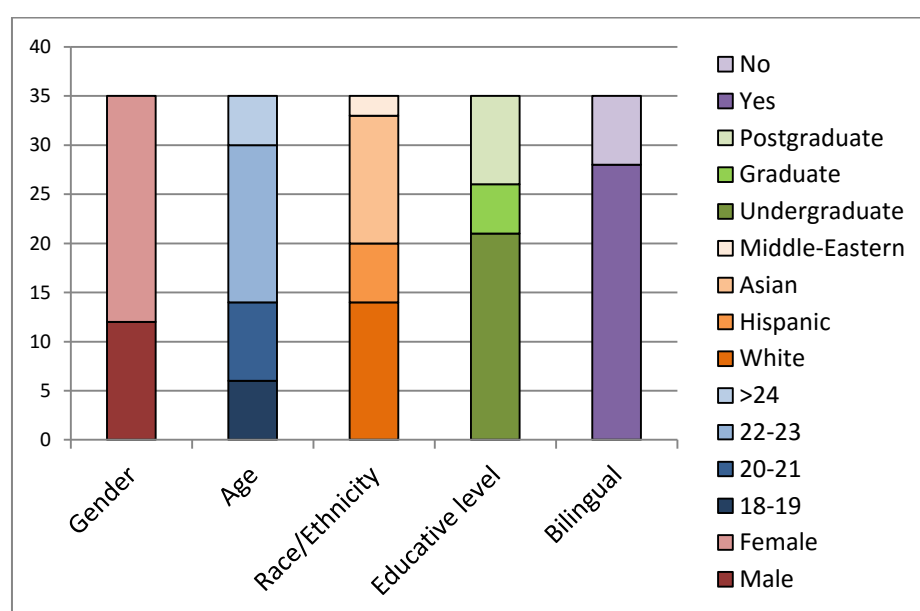


Figure 6: Relationship between gender, age, race/ethnicity, educative level and bilingual identity of the 35 international students interviewed.

<sup>7</sup> See Anex I to find the survey and the answers obtained by non-native English speakers. Furthermore, to find the survey and answers obtained by native English speakers, see Anex II.

As shown in Figure 6, there are five colors which divide the following features: sex, age, race or ethnicity, educative level and bilingual identity. Therefore, focusing on the first trait in red, we can notice an almost total predominance of the female sex against males. As a result, although some may argue that there is a woman-leading tendency when studying abroad or improving a foreign language, we will take into account the voluntarily nature of this survey. In other words, since the necessity of looking for a certain number of students has not been sought out, nor the same number of male and female interviewees, we will just assert that the female sector seems to be more collaborative with the survey compared to the male one, which does not necessarily mean that there is a predominance of that sex when studying foreign languages.

Naturally, we can see the relationship between age and educative level through the blue and green colors: Most of them are junior or senior undergraduate students. As for race and ethnics, we can see how the vast majority are Asiatic or Europeans, since Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Dutch and French were the five most spoken languages as mother tongues by internationals (see Annex I).

Finally, it is interesting to see how the great majority not only has a knowledge in Linguistics, but also considers themselves to be English bilingual, which already hints some features of their linguistic identity. That is, since more than a half of the surveyed have been in contact with English between 10 and 20 years (see Annex I), we can presume that English is a language that has been living along their mother tongue for almost all their lives, influencing this way their linguistic identity as non-native English speakers. These assumptions can be supported since they all are voluntarily studying in the United States, showing this way an additional interest for the language and culture of the country. Hence, they feel comfortable with the language as a part of themselves.

Under the title of “English & You”, the second section aimed to analyze the attitudes of these students towards English by making them to position on a certain situation, according to their own experience with English. In Figure 7 we can see three different situations with their corresponding results. In situation #1 and #2, interviewees were asked which student (A, B or C) they preferred to be and why. On the other hand, situation #3 was about choosing which text would be more likely to be orally produced by a native English speaker. More than a half of the interviewees preferred to be alike the student who “can pronounce English just like a native speaker and sometimes people think [he or she is] a native speaker”.

The answer corresponds to Timmis' survey, where Student A's assertions were preferred. His students declared sentences like "I live in this country [England]. I want to be natural" or "I was born in China and not in Britain, so I cannot pronounce English like a native speaker... but Student A this is ideal aim, I try my best to achieve that aim" (Timmis, 2002: 242). We agree with Timmis when these answers stray from Jenkins' words: "the majority expresses a desire to retain something from their L1". Therefore, the majority does not only feel bilingual, but they also aspire to sound like a native English speaker.

Again, Timmis' answers match with the results obtained our survey in situation #2. Here we can see the highly linguistic background of the participants, since they relate being proficient with being able to speak correctly (that is, grammatically) in formal and informal contexts, as native speakers do. It is also tightly linked to situation #1, where again, there is a preference for non-native English speakers to be as closely alike to natives as possible. It is interesting to highlight how the vast majority chose to be student C in order to be more easily intelligible, which is closely related to the preference of communicative purpose of English as a *Lingua Franca* rather than grammatical, as Jenkins asserted.

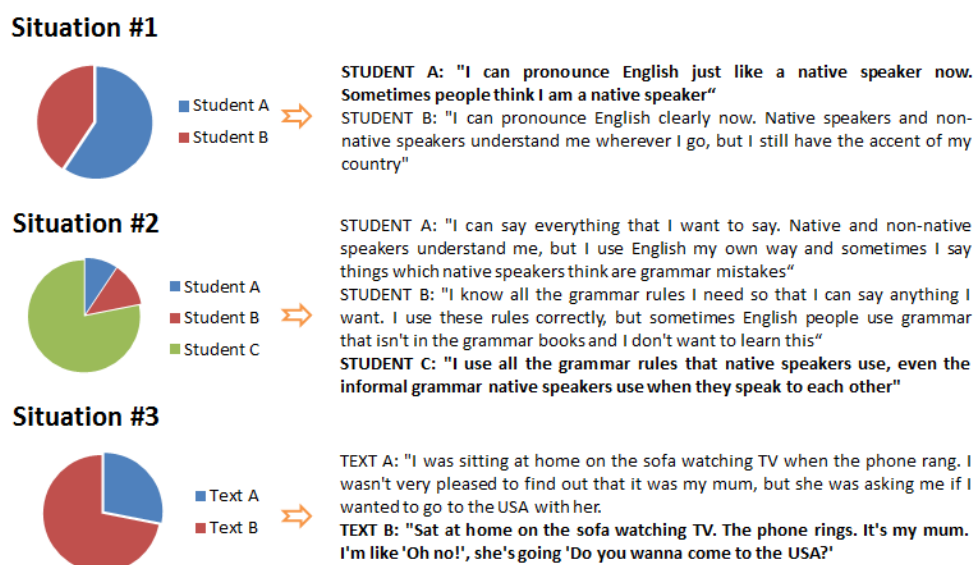


Figure 7: Situations and most-chosen answers in bold by the 35 international students

According to Timmis, his students correctly identified the native-speaker example. Our interviewees failed into the same mistake, because both text A and B could have been perfectly uttered by a native speaker, depending on the context and situation. Nevertheless, when asking about how important it was for them to talk like text B, the majority strongly agreed or just agreed with the statement, justifying again their tendency to sound like a native.

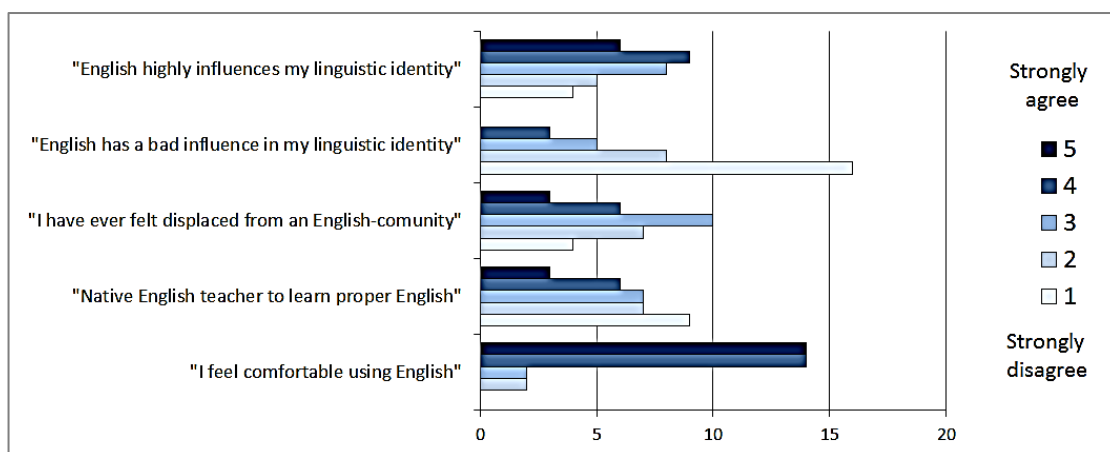


Figure 8: Level of agreement with the statements provided by the 35 international students

Following a Likert model, the students had to evaluate their level of agreement with regards to the statements provided. First of all, as expected after analyzing their bilingual identity, the vast majority agrees or strongly agrees with feeling comfortable using English.

Of course the sentence is broad enough so that it can be understood a usage with native and other non-native speakers. Even if the majority agrees with having English as a high-influenced feature of their linguistic identity (providing Verleysen's definition (2011:5) of the concept), most of them tend to agree on a misplacement of an English community when not being proficient.

Although some people might find these two answers somewhat paradoxical, in their favor, they could have recalled to past moments when their English was not proficient enough. Nevertheless, if considering the fact of having English as a *Lingua Franca*, there is a contradiction with the theory exposed.

Finally, the fact that most people remained impartial or disagreed that it is necessary to have a native-English teacher in order to speak English properly may, on the one hand, have been influenced by the fact that the only ESOL professor in SUNY Geneseo is Professor Irene Belyakov-Goodman, who has a strong Russian linguistic identity and background. On the one hand, some assert that a native speaker may have a wider lexicon in his or her mother tongue and the pronunciation would be more accurate, whereas a non-native teacher already knows the struggles of learning that language and would be better to teach or focus on the peak points of the learning procedure. All in all, it is universally acknowledged that being a native does not make someone being better or worse teacher.

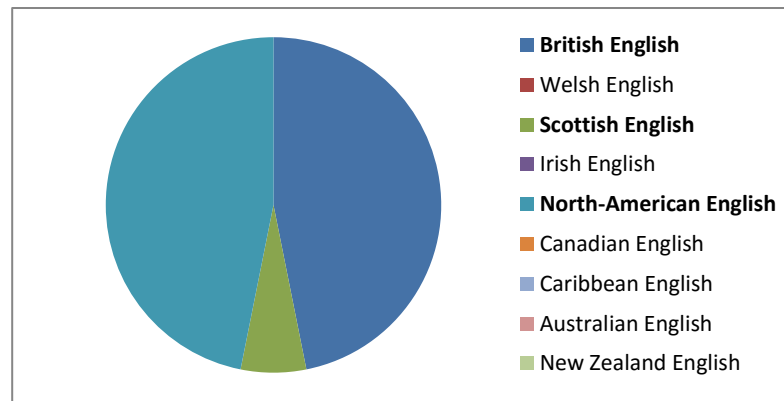


Figure 9: Native English accent preferred by the 35 international students

From my personal experience, it is not clear what is more surprising: The fact that the percentages of students preferring the American and the British accent or having a pretty high percentage of people preferring the Scottish accent. In any case, the pre-surveyed expectations were to find the American accent as the preferred one since every student surveyed has stayed at least a semester in an American country.

### 3.2.2. *Native English speakers*

Now we are going to focus on the survey made to the American students (native English speakers). In this case, and even more than in the previous one, the ethnic background of the interviewees is going to be relevant, because, as expected, we will find plenty of Americans whose first language would be one shared with English, that is, bilingual.

As we did with non-native English speakers, we divided the survey into three sections. The first one consisted on nine questions which helped to catalogue the interviewees into the different relevant traits for this research. Regarding gender and ethnicity in red and orange, we can certainly assert that there is a tight relationship with the demographics offered by the university (cf. <http://geneseo.edu/ir/fast-facts-page>). According to this website, around 30% of the campus is male, as it is also shown in Figure 10. It would be noteworthy to mention this little yet determined percentage who considered “other”: we might think of the Geneseo Pride Alliance, which fought for the rights of transgender or other minorities. SUNY Geneseo is diverse not only in gender but also in ethnicity. As far as the educative level, as expected, everybody is an undergraduate because of the nature of the University, and therefore, the majority is around 18 or 21 years old.



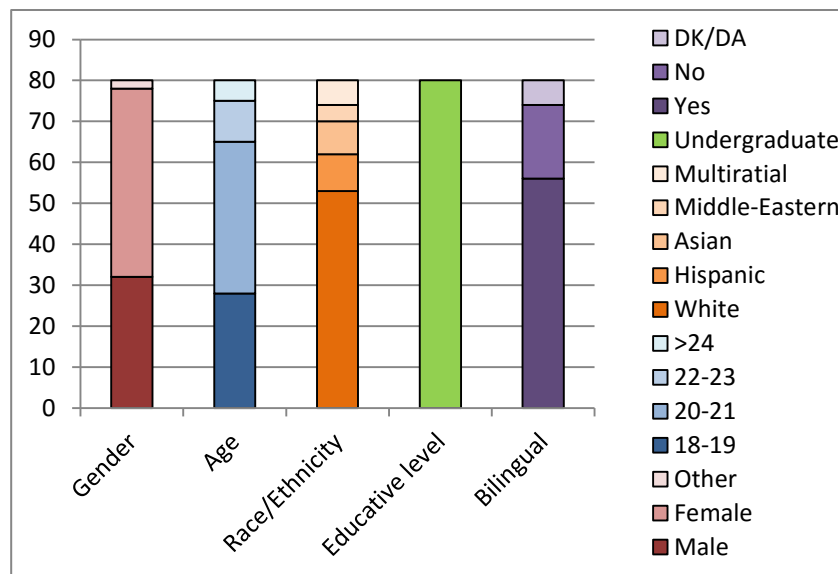


Figure 10: Relationship between gender, age, race/ethnicity, educational level and bilingual identity of the 80 American students surveyed

In contrast to non-native speakers, we can appreciate how native English speakers hesitate more to identify with the concept of bilingualism. It is true though that there is an important number of bilingual Americans because of their familiar background, but still and all, it is a good percentage to feel comfortable speaking in another language that is not English, leaving aside these theories of monolingual America. Almost half of the interviewees studied Spanish as a second language, followed by French and German (see Annex II).

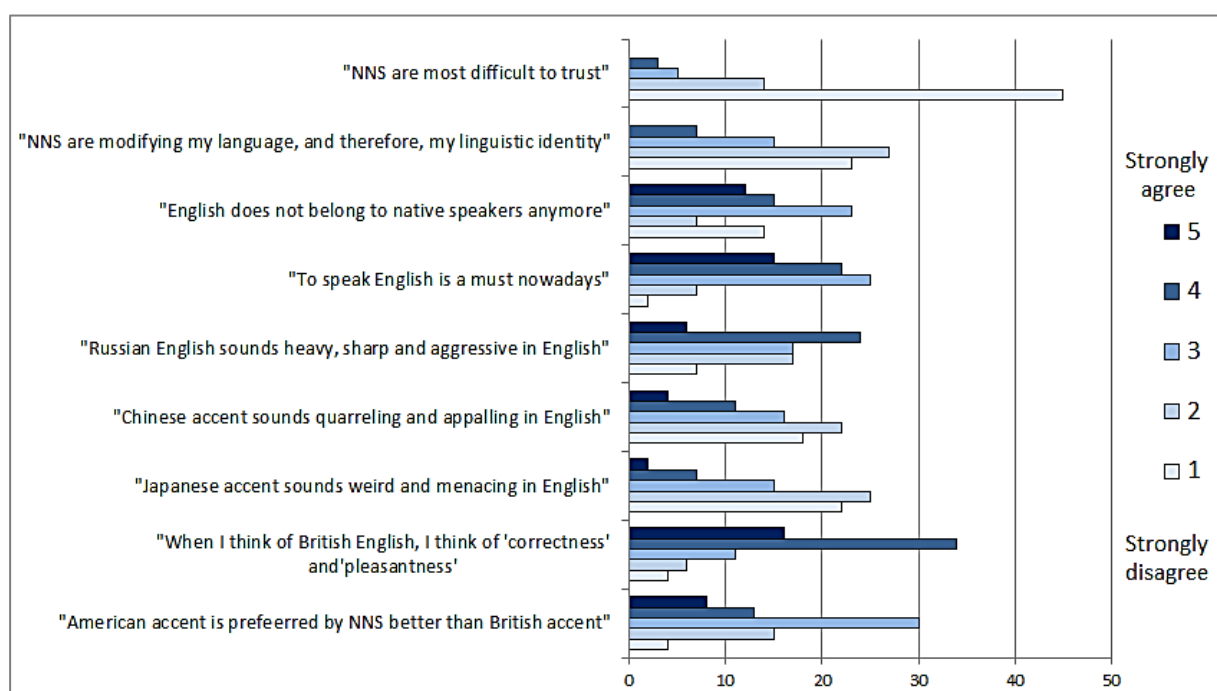


Figure 11: Level of agreement with the statements provided by the 80 American students

In contrast to the non-native's survey, the second part in this case is full of Likert-like situations with a compulsory explanatory option after each one. Most of Americans deny the fact that non-native English speakers are difficult to trust (against prejudices). In contrast to Jenkins' comments (2009: 204), we see how Japanese or Chinese accents are far to be alike "weird, menacing and appalling", according to Geneseo students. Nevertheless, it is true that Russian accent is still considered aggressive and hard. This can be related to historical contradictions and social prestige of Russian politics on the United States. Furthermore, as Jenkins stated, British is considered very correct against Americans. In contrast to the survey made to non-native speakers, that everything was 50-50, Americans consider British to be more prestigious.

The third part of the survey was about English in the world, and it can be divided into five subsequent topics (see Annex II): 55% of the Americans considered British English to be the most prestigious variety, against a 21,2% who preferred their native variety instead. It would be noteworthy to mention how a 7,3% considered worldwide varieties as prestigious or correct or, rather, none of them is more prestigious than the others (16%).

On the other hand, American varieties of English (21,4%), together with the Indian and African, are considered the least prestigious varieties of English. Again, there is a 15,4% who properly considered as least prestigious none of the varieties shown. Moving onwards to those countries whose first language is not English, Americans have considered Germany, France, the Netherlands and Finland as the four countries which best speak English. Unlike, Japan, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Spain are considered the countries with worst English spoken. Some of those countries share the least comprehensible English accent, together with Greece. Although 69% of those interviewed claimed not to have into consideration the socioeconomical level of the countries when voting, there is an existing percentage who did take it in consideration.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Once having analyzed the results obtained in the practical framework, and taking into account the theory in which this paper is immersed, we can proceed with the writing of the conclusions about English as a *Lingua Franca* and the identities of those speakers in the educative community in Geneseo.

Firstly, we have theoretically demonstrated how closely related the concepts of *Lingua Franca* and linguistic identity are, not only from a linguistic perspective, but also from a sociocultural one. That is, it was because of the historical background of the language and especially the socio-economic power of the United States that English became the current international language for communicative purposes among worldwide speakers, and not because of its apparent easy grammar or pronunciation, as we have already proven when contrasting it with additional *Linguas Francas*, such as Esperanto or Latin, among others. As it is shown in the Figure 9, for non-native English speakers, the most preferred accents are American or British English related to the two most powerful and most influential English speaking countries in the current society, and native English speakers from Geneseo also agreed. Nevertheless, as an international communicative language, English should lack these sorts of sociopolitical influences, since English as a *Lingua Franca* is an identity in itself.

Secondly, taking into account the results in the practical framework, English plays a very important role in the identity of international students in Geneseo. Whether it comes as a result of long-time contact with that language, due to its prestige, or its importance in the current working world, or even just for pleasure, international students found it necessary to reach a proficient level, both grammatically and, above all, orally (see Figure 7 on page 29). Although it has been also proven that the communicative purpose prevails over grammaticality in English as a *Lingua Franca*, the majority of non-native speakers in Geneseo feels that being fluent in English and sound like a native would provide them further working chances and further social chances in native English countries (see Figure 8).

As a personal reflection, it is interesting to observe how little the situation has changed in time. In the past, some languages were imposed during colonization, developing into global communicative languages for trading. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this imposition is still a fact, but slightly more indirect. To be an English proficient is so far a job requirement for any non-native speaker, and this might be what motivates Geneseo students to take a semester abroad

in an American college, or just-graduated students to find intensive immersion language courses to sound like a native as soon and accurate as possible.

Finally, the same way that English gained importance as a *Lingua Franca* because of the United States, which is the second country that holds most Spanish speakers in the world, it is not surprising to think of a swap of roles and to consider Spanish as the possible future *Lingua Franca*. The increasing Hispanic population in the country, together with the lack of politics of language planning towards English and the continuity of this language in the same territory throughout history, makes it very credible to think of a future Spanish overtaking.

In short, we can conclude that this paper presented a tested hypothesis which yielded fulfilled objectives. It seems that there has never been such a time when so many nations need to talk to each other so much and wished to travel to so many places. There has never been such a strain placed on the conversational resources to translation and interpreting. And never has there been a more urgent need for a global language. Since all use of language constitutes an act of identity, it seems likely that the English as a *Lingua Franca* users develop their own markers of identity.

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## ANNEX I: Model of survey “English and Identity: Non-Native Speakers”

Introduction: Welcome! If you are non-native English speaker, please feel free to log in and spend no more than 5 minutes to answer these questions anonymously regarding to your linguistic identity as a speaker. Thank you.

\*Mandatory

### Personal Information



**1. What is your gender identity? \***

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other:

**2. What is your age? \***

**3. What is your race/ethnicity? \***

- ☐ Non-Hispanic, White or Euro-American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino/a
- ☐ Black, Afro-Caribbean or African-American
- ☐ Asian or Asian-American
- ☐ Middle Eastern or Arab American
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Multiracial/Multiethnic
- ☐ Other:

**4. Where are you from? \***

Please, indicate the city and the country

**5. Where are you living now? \***

Indicate the city and the country, and how long you have been living in that place by now

**6. What is your education level? \***

- ☐ Postgraduate / Master student
- ☐ Graduate student
- ☐ Undergraduate student
- ☐ Elementary / Middle / High school student
- ☐ Other:

**7. Are you familiar with Linguistics or Communications? \***

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other:

**8. What is your first language/L1? \***

**9. Are you / Do you consider yourself English bilingual? \***

**10. "I feel comfortable using English"**

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

**11. How long have you been learning English?**

Might be understood as academic learning, i.e., schools, academics, language institutes...

- ☐ 4 years or less
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10-15 years
- ☐ 15-20 years
- ☐ 21 years or more

### English & You

How much do you agree with these statements?



## English & You

How much do you agree with these statements?



### 12. Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country for more than a month?

If so, indicate the country and the time you have been living there.

### 13. Why did you decide to start learning English?

#### 13.a Have the reasons changed since then?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other:

13.a.a. If so, why? \*

### 14. Would you prefer to be student A or B?

STUDENT A: "I can pronounce English just like a native speaker now. Sometimes people think I am a native speaker"

STUDENT B: "I can pronounce English clearly now. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I still have the accent of my country"

14.a. Explain why: \*

### 15. Would you prefer to be student A, B or C?

STUDENT A: "I can say everything that I want to say. Native and non-native speakers understand me, but I use English my own way and sometimes I say things which native speakers think are grammar mistakes"

STUDENT B: "I know all the grammar rules I need so that I can say anything I want. I use these rules correctly, but sometimes English people use grammar that isn't in the grammar books and I don't want to learn this"

STUDENT C: "I use all the grammar rules that native speakers use, even the informal grammar native speakers use when they speak to each other"

15.a. Explain why: \*

### 16. Which situation do you think was -spoken- by a native speaker?

SITUATION A: "I had a disaster last night. I was sitting at home on the sofa watching TV when the phone rang. I wasn't very pleased to find out that it was my mum, but she was asking me if I wanted to go to the USA with her."

SITUATION B: "Disaster last night. Sat at home on the sofa watching TV. The phone rings. It's my mum. I'm like 'Oh no!', she's going 'Do you wanna come to the USA?'"

16.a. "It is important for me to be able to use the kind of English in situation B"

Strongly disagree    1   2   3   4   5    Strongly agree

### 17. "To learn proper English, my teacher has to be native-English speaker"

Strongly disagree    1   2   3   4   5    Strongly agree

17.a. Explain why: \*

### 18. "I have ever felt displaced from an English-speaking community because of not being linguistically proficient"

1   2   3   4   5

## English & You

How much do you agree with these statements?



## English in the world



Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

### 19. "English has a bad influence on with my linguistic identity"

Linguistic identity: "The way in which we understand the relationship between our first language (L1) and ourselves" (Verleysen, 2011:5)

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

19.a. Explain why: \*

### 20. "English highly influences my linguistic identity"

Linguistic identity: "The way in which we understand the relationship between our first language (L1) and ourselves" (Verleysen, 2011:5)

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

20.a. Explain why: \*

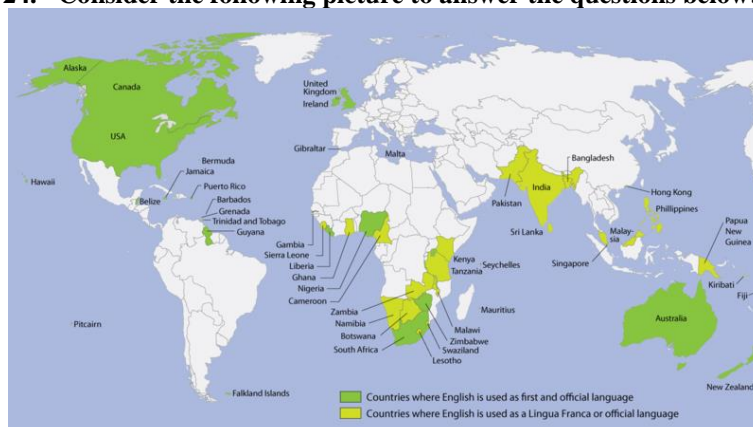
21. Explain in your own words what the concept of "linguistic identity" means to you, and additionally, what your "linguistic identity" consists of. \*

### 22. Which native-English accent would you prefer to have?

- ☐ British English
- ☐ Welsh English
- ☐ Scottish English
- ☐ Irish English
- ☐ North-American English
- ☐ Canadian English
- ☐ Caribbean English
- ☐ Australian English
- ☐ New Zealand English

23. From the list of accents provided above, which one would you consider to be the most suitable one to get a job? Why?

24. Consider the following picture to answer the questions below:



24.a. In which country do you think the most prestigious English variety is spoken? Why? \*

Prestigious, adj.: "Inspiring respect and admiration; having high status" (Oxford Dictionary)

24.b. In which country do you think the least prestigious English variety is spoken? Why? \*

## ANNEX II: Model of survey “English and Identity: Native Speakers”

Introduction: Welcome! If you are a native English speaker and current student at SUNY Geneseo, please feel free to log in and spend no more than 5 minutes to answer these questions anonymously regarding to your linguistic identity as a speaker. Thank you. \*Mandatory

### Personal Information



1. **What is your gender identity? \***
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Other:
2. **What is your age? \***
3. **What is your race/ethnicity? \***
  - ☐ Non-Hispanic, White or Euro-American
  - ☐ Hispanic or Latino/a
  - ☐ Black, Afro-Caribbean or African-American
  - ☐ Asian or Asian-American
  - ☐ Middle Eastern or Arab American
  - ☐ Native American
  - ☐ Multiracial/Multiethnic
  - ☐ Other:
4. **Where are you from? \***

Please, indicate the city and the country
5. **Where are you living now? \***

Indicate the city and the country, and how long you have been living in that place by now
6. **What is your education level? \***
  - ☐ Postgraduate / Master student
  - ☐ Graduate student
  - ☐ Undergraduate student
  - ☐ Elementary / Middle / High school student
  - ☐ Other:
7. **Are you familiar with Linguistics or Communications? \***
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other:
8. **What is your first language/L1? \***
9. **Are you / Do you consider yourself bilingual/multilingual? \***

Bilingual, adj: "speaking two languages fluently" | Multilingual, adj: "speaking three or more languages fluently" (Oxford Dic.)

  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other
10. **Do you speak any foreign language(s) or are you currently learning any? \***
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - 10.a. **If so, indicate which one(s) and how long you have been speaking/ learning this/these language(s) by now.**

## English & You

How much do you agree with these statements?



11. "American accent is preferred by non-native English speakers better than British accent" \*

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

11.a. Why?

12. "When I think of British English, I think of 'correctness' and 'pleasantness'"\*

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

13. "Japanese accent sounds weird and menacing in English" \*

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

14. "Chinese accent sounds quarreling and appalling in English"\*

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

15. "Russian English sounds heavy, sharp and aggressive in English" \*

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

16. "To speak English is a must nowadays" \*

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

17. "English does not belong to native speakers anymore" \*

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

17.a. Why?

18. "Non-native English speakers are modifying my language, and therefore, my linguistic identity" \*

According to David Chrystal, "there is a concern about how non-native English countries use the language in a very different way as native speakers do, putting into risk the standardization of the language" (Chrystal, 2003:19).

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

19. "Non-native English speakers are more difficult to trust" \*

Shiri Lev-Ari's "Why don't we believe non-native speakers?", talks about the causes that lead non-native speakers to sound less credible and, hence, he demonstrates how the accent influence on credibility" ([link](#))

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Strongly agree

20. Are you proud of being American?

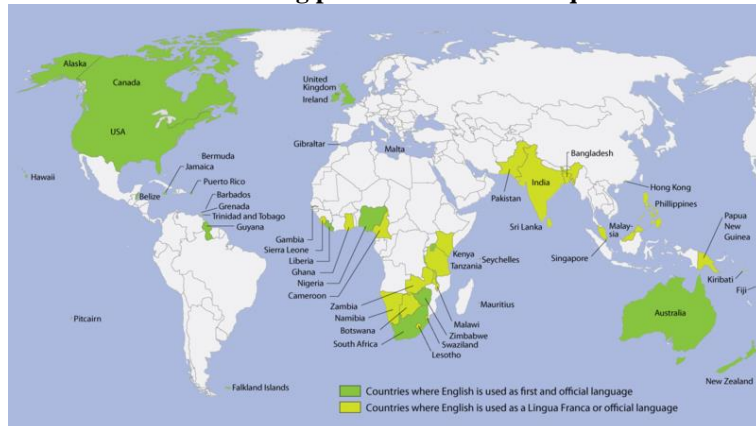
- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

## English in the world



20.a. When answering the previous question, what have you considered? i.e. language, culture, power, diversity, etc.

21. Consider the following picture to answer the questions below:

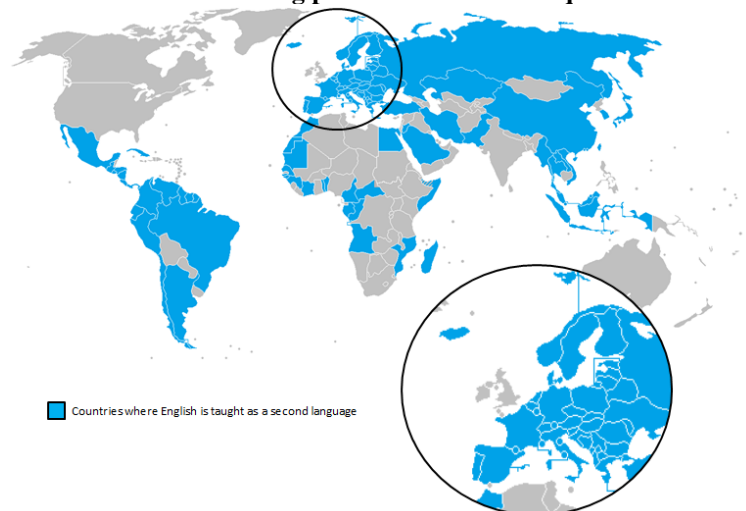


21.a. In which country do you think the most prestigious/correct English variety is spoken? Why? \*

Prestigious, adj.: "Inspiring respect and admiration; having high status" | Correct, adj: "conforming to accepted social standards, proper" (Oxford Dictionary)

21.b. In which country do you think the least prestigious/correct English variety is spoken? Why? \*

22. Consider the following picture to answer the questions below:



22.a. In which country English is best spoken? Why?

22.b. In which country English is worst spoken? Why?

22.c. Broadly speaking, where do you think it would be hardest to understand non-native English speakers? Why?

22.d. Were all the reasons provided founded on the socioeconomic level of the country?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other:

### **ANNEX III: Non-native speakers' answers compilation**

To access, click on the following [link](#) or via GoogleForms.

### **ANNEX IV: Native speakers' answers compilation**

To access, click on the following [link](#) or via GoogleForms.